books

The 'disease' of dissent

Clayton Yeo

Russia's Political Hospitals: The Abuse of Psychiatry in the USSR by Sidney Bloch and Peter Reddaway with a foreword by Vladimir Bukovsky *Victor Gollancz* 510pp £6.95

Psychiatry on Trial by Malcolm Lader *Penguin* 202pp 80p

Karatelny meditsin (Punitive Medicine) by Alexander Podrabinek *Samizdat* Moscow 1977

Dans le Carnaval de l'Histoire: Mémoires by Leonid Plyushch *Editions du Seuil* Paris 440pp

In May 1977 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet approved the draft of a new Constitution, intended to replace the one promulgated in 1936. Like its predecessor, the new Constitution guarantees Soviet citizens 'freedom of speech, press, assembly, meetings, street processions and demonstrations'. However, it retains from the Stalin Constitution the provision that these rights are guaranteed, 'in conformity with the interests of the working people and for the purpose of strengthening the socialist system' and adds the new qualifier that 'exercise by citizens of rights and freedoms must not injure the interests of society and the state, and the rights of other citizens'.

Thus the fundamental law of the USSR will continue to sanction in the broadest manner the proscription of any exercise of human rights which the authorities regard as inconvenient. The reader need only refer to this journal's regular section *Index*/Index to recollect some of the most common methods used by the Soviet authorities to repress citizens who criticise official practices or advocate alternatives to them: police harassment, job dismissal, imprisonment, confinement to psychiatric hospitals.

Throughout the 1970s the abuse of psychiatry to repress dissenters in the USSR has attracted more international attention and outrage than any of the other forms of political and religious persecution there. Soviet human rights activists, individual victims of psychiatric abuses and their families and friends have persistently appealed to international opinion as a force which the Soviet authorities are more likely to respect than criticism or appeals from within the country. At great risk to themselves they have motivated world concern and given it the possibility of effective expression by regularly providing information on individual cases and general practices of persecution through psychiatry. This primary documentation from the USSR (most of it in the form of *samizdat* – writings which are produced unofficially and without submission to the government censor) is by now of considerable volume. It is increasingly supplemented by reports from non-Soviet news media, uncatalogued information accumulated by concerned persons abroad, the testimony of Soviet emigrants, and even information provided incidentally by Soviet official spokesmen in their denials of all complaints that 'so-called dissenters' are wrongfully confined to psychiatric hospitals. A large literature has been developed on the subject, but it is dispersed and to a large extent available only in Russian.

Russia's Political Hospitals: *The Abuse of Psychiatry in the USSR* is the most thorough study yet made of this subject. The authors, a qualified psychiatrist and a Sovietologist respectively, worked on this book over a period of five years. It contains copious *samizdat* documentation, interviews with former victims of the abuses and with Soviet psychiatrists (some now living abroad, some still living in the USSR and hence anonymous) and a wealth of other sources of information. The availability of professional psychiatric expertise in the author's team contributes greatly to the quality of their analysis and presentation.

The book examines the entire subject, aspect by aspect. After an overview of the evolution and character of Soviet psychiatry there are chapters on the victims of the abuses, the legal procedures for confinement to psychiatric hospitals, the conditions in those hospitals and the treatment of their inmates, and the role of involved doctors and the nature of diagnosis provided by them in political and religious cases. Other chapters treat the development of open criticism within the USSR of the abuses and the course of international reaction (especially by psychiatrists) to them. There are ten appendices, consisting mostly of translations of primary documents and official Soviet statements but also including comprehensive recommendations for 'combating and preventing' the abuses.

Critics of various official Soviet practices, nationalists, religious believers, would-be emigrants and persons who have simply been 'inconvenient to petty tyrants' are among those who have been confined to psychiatric hospitals for political rather than authentic medical reasons. In several known cases the authorities have used as a pretext some previous physical or mental illness of the victim, but in general, the authors conclude, it is difficult to predict on what criteria a dissenter may be subjected to this form of persecution rather than, say, a sentence of imprisonment. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the most prominent of Soviet dissenters were made special targets for psychiatric hospitalisation, evidently so as to make highly visible official determination to deal firmly with the newly-developed human rights movement. However, since 1972 this part of official policy has evidently been altered in response to international protest; since then the authorities have tended to exempt the best-known dissenters (though not less prominent ones) from this form of repression.

The authors are duly cautious regarding the number of vicitims of political abuse of psychiatry. One of the book's most valuable features is a carefully-compiled register of 210 persons who have been wrongfully confined in the period 1962-76. The authors regard this list as incomplete by far. They calculate that the number of persons confined for political reasons at any one time in the country's dozen or so special (that is, maximum security) psychiatric hospitals is roughly 350. They refrain from estimating how many political prisoners there are in the country's approximately 200 ordinary (that is, civil) psychiatric hospitals, but with good reason speculate that this figure is larger than that for the special psychiatric hospitals. An important point which the authors illustrate is that the ordinary psychiatric hospitals are widely used for the short-term incarceration of dissenters, for example as a means of intimidation or to get them out of the way for important state occasions.

Bloch and Reddaway distinguish three groups of Soviet psychiatrists. The relatively small 'core group' consists of those whose names have figured regularly in cases of politically-motivated confinement and in mendacious official denials (frequently for foreign consumption) that anything is wrong with Soviet psychiatry. They are entrenched in Moscow's Serbsky Institute of Forensic Psychiatry, the Institute of Psychiatry of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences and the USSR Ministry of Health, and their ranks are headed by Andrei Snezhnevsky, the director of the Institute of Psychiatry. Bloch and Reddaway have assembled a biographic sketch of Snezhnevsky. He emerges as a man who rose to authority during the Stalinist era of scientific witch-hunts and whose dogmatic and sweeping theory of schizophrenia came to be adopted in Soviet psychiatric teaching and practice in much the same way as did Lysenko's theories in the field of biology. The authors provide a professionally-informed evaluation of Snezhnevsky's approach to mental illness (and of other relevant standards of psychiatric diagnosis and treatment prevalent in the USSR). They find much that is wrong from a medical point of view and illustrate abundantly how 'the Snezhnevsky school' has facilitated the wrongful diagnosis of dissenters as mentally ill and set the standard for psychiatrists throughout the country who are required to deal with such cases referred to them by the security organs. According to the authors 'the vast majority of ordinary psychiatrists' rarely deal with political cases and are 'relatively ignorant' of the way in which their profession is being abused in aid of political security. They are most likely to learn of it from foreign radio broadcasts or official denials in the Soviet media, or when a political case is referred to them. In the latter event their reactions vary. Some, whether from incompetence, cowardice or conviction, cooperate fully with the security organs and diagnose 'dissent as disease'. Other cases are cited in the book in which local psychiatrists have covertly helped the victim assigned to them. Most 'average' psychiatrists prefer to 'go through the motions', hoping that higher authorities will take distasteful decisions off their hands and not daring to voice any doubts they may have.

Bloch and Reddaway also distinguish a third category of Soviet psychiatrists, easily the smal-

lest: those who overtly dissent from such practices and attempt to expose them. Very few are known by name. One is Dr Semyon Gluzman, from the Ukraine, who in 1971 joined with two other psychiatrists in writing for *samizdat* an *in absentia* diagnosis arguing that the well-known human rights activist Pyotr Grigorenko was wrongfully confined to a psychiatric hospital. Dr Gluzman was sentenced in 1972 to seven years' imprisonment and three years in exile for 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda', while his two colleagues remain anonymous.

One of the simplest proofs of political abuse of psychiatry in the USSR is that psychiatrists (especially those of the Serbsky Institute) have in many known cases recommended that dissenters be confined to special rather than ordinary psychiatric hospitals. Special psychiatric hospitals are maximum security institutions legally designated for 'especially dangerous' mentally ill persons and administered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, whose machine-gun equipped personnel guard the inmates.

Bloch and Reddaway describe in harrowing detail conditions in the special psychiatric hospitals, which they regard as 'among the most cruel [mental] institutions in the world'. Indeed, their conditions are of enormous discredit to the country's medical system. As a matter of routine, convicted criminals serve as orderlies. It is typical of the book's meticulous attention to detail that the authors do not content themselves with stating this fact but describe how these convicts are recruited, their living and work conditions and the pressures which induce them to subject the inmates (both the genuinely ill and the 'politicals') to a permanent reign of terror.

The authors describe further how many (but not all) inmates of these institutions are treated with powerful depressant drugs without regard to their medical condition or needs. They ascribe this practice to 'punitive and intimidatory motives of officials and doctors within the special psychiatric hospitals and, by implication, outside them. It is important to note that genuinely ill inmates as well as political victims are exposed to these various abuses.

Once released from a special or ordinary psychiatric hospital the victimised dissenter is still exposed to the attention of psychiatrists. He is assigned two 'public danger' ratings, one for the psychiatric files and one for the police, and (in many cases) an invalid category restricting his choice of work. He is henceforth liable to be called in at any time for psychiatric examination, and the authorities have a ready-made pretext for confining him when convenient. This 'Damocles' sword' of post-release psychiatric observation lends the civil commitment procedures additional advantages for flexible response to unapproved-of behaviour of dissenters registered as having been mentally ill.

It is obvious that in any country informed and articulate public opinion is important for preventing abuse of psychiatry (and other abuses of authority). Criticism of any official practice in the USSR is a dangerous venture, Bloch and Reddaway indicate the price which human rights activists there have paid for trying to expose political abuses of psychiatry.

Probably the most dramatic and consequential single exposure of the abuses came in documentation which Vladimir Bukovsky prepared in 1970. Bukovsky made this material available to psychiatrists abroad and appealed to them to evaluate it. Bukovsky was soon arrested, but he and other Soviet human rights activists counted on an appropriate response from the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), whose five-to-six-yearly congress was taking place in Mexico City in 1971. Bloch and Reddaway examine in detail the manoeuvrings and ineptitude which dominated the WPA's handling of the matter and resulted in a totally negative response to Bukovsky's appeal and to the issue itself. Several months after the WPA congress Bukovsky received a one-day trial for compiling and distributing the documentation, which was judged to be slanderous 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda'. The authors broach the terrible possibility that the severity of his sentence (two years in a prison, five years in a camp and five years in exile) may have been due in part to the indifference of the WPA.

Russia's Political Hospitals is a fine piece of scholarship. Consistently down-to-earth and directed to a wide readership, it will for at least the next several years serve as the standard reference work on its subject.

Apologists for political abuses of psychiatry in the USSR count heavily on widespread uneasiness as to the potential of psychiatry everywhere for unjustifiably depriving individuals of their rights. Certainly one of the main reasons for the hesitance of many non-Soviet psychiatrists to take a stand is the fear that confirmation of these abuses will lend support to criticism of their entire profession.

Dr Malcolm Lader's *Psychiatry on Trial* surveys this complex of issues. The author is a British psychiatrist who has done research on drug treatments for mental illnesses and on schizophrenia.

His book includes chapters on the organisation of the psychiatric profession in Great Britain, the USA and the USSR, on the general features of the most common psychiatric disorders, on criteria for diagnoses of these conditions, on prescription of treatment, and on psychiatry and the law.

The author illustrates the deficiencies in each of these areas which lend themselves to abuse, showing why psychiatry is particularly vulnerable in this respect. When examining Soviet abuses he deals with most of the aspects of the subject covered in the Bloch-Reddaway book. He has the added advantage of having discussed them with official representatives of Soviet psychiatry, including Snezhnevsky and Georgy Morozov. He faces up to the difficulty of 'proving' that an individual whom one has never met has been wrongfully diagnosed and confined solely for political reasons, but shows why as a psychiatrist he is satisfied that this has been done systematically in the USSR.

While Malcolm Lader warns that abuses like those in the USSR 'could develop . . . in other countries, even those with democratic and open systems of government', Alexander Podrabinek argues that they are specific to the political and sociological conditions prevailing in the USSR. His *Punitive Medicine* has not yet been translated and has been 'published' only as a *samizdat* typescript in the Soviet Union. Podrabinek is a young Moscow medical assistant and an active member of the Working Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes, an unofficial body set up in January this year. He has since been subjected to repeated police searches and questionings, and in July he was threatened with 10 years' imprisonment and exile for 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda'.

Punitive Medicine is the first full-length scholarly study of this subject to have come out of the USSR, its importance being comparable to that of the 'Bukovsky papers' of 1971. It is to be hoped that it will quickly find an English translator and publisher.

Leonid Plyushch is one of the most famous victims of psychiatric abuse in the USSR. Born in 1939 in the Ukraine, Plyushch became a radical critic of the Soviet system from Marxist and nationalist positions and an active participant of the Soviet human rights movement. He was arrested in 1972, diagnosed as schizophrenic and confined to the Dnepropetrovsk special psychiatric hospital for two-and-a-half years, during which time he was systematically tortured with drugs. Directly as a result of a campaign begun on his behalf by Soviet human rights activists and taken up abroad, he was released in January 1976 and sent out of the country. He now lives in France.

Less than one quarter of *Dans le Carnaval de l'Histoire: Mémoires* is devoted to his period in psychiatric confinement. The bulk of the book is his account of his intellectual development from his childhood onwards.

As a teenager Plyushch was, by his account, a loyal Stalinist and an active participant in various vigilante-type activities for young people in assistance of the police. In 1956 at the age of seventeen he even tried to enlist in the KGB. He was turned down and went on instead to study mathematics at universities in Odessa and Kiev. His entry into university in 1956 coincided with Khrushchev's 'secret speech' denouncing Stalin and the suppression of the Hungarian uprising by Soviet troops. The ensuing years were marked by a continuing partial 'thaw' in Soviet literature and art, which reached a peak with the official publication of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1962. For Plyushch the enhanced political and literary awareness thus engendered was further stimulated by the jerky inconsistency of official rejection of the Stalin legacy, manifested for example in the high level denunciation of artists and writers whose work had transgressed unmarked boundaries of what was permissible and the continuing state security presence in all public institutions, including the universities. Besides studying mathematics Plyushch took up other pursuits similar to those of his counterparts in western universities. He followed closely the relatively liberal, 'revisionist' literature which saw official publication in those days, and he discovered the then-new alternative medium of *samizdat,* which at that time was mainly literary in content. He took an interest in foreign literature, especially 'absurdist' works (Kafka, Beckett, Camus), the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* and other of Marx's early works, yoga, telepathy and science fiction. Already in 1956, his first year in Odessa university, he was questioned by a university cadres official about a specialist in idealist philosophy with whom he was acquainted. He was able to 'duck' this question and another KGB effort in 1961 to recruit him as an informer on a visiting Czech parapsychologist.

By the time of his graduation in 1962 Plyushch had concluded that 'a new form of society based on exploitation' existed in the USSR. Convinced that Soviet public life was dominated by mendacity based on universal fear, he sought escape into

a career in scientific research. His account of his six years' work in a Kiev institute of applied mathematics provides interesting insights, most of them sharply critical, into the conditions of scientific research in the USSR. From his account of them most of the projects assigned to him during this period were fraudulent or at best badly conceived and Plyushch encountered numerous instances of corruption and imposition of cynical political criteria onto the institute's work. Not long before he was sacked from his post in 1968 he had decided that even in science there was no refuge from 'the lie' and that his only career lay in radical politics.

Very few Ukrainian dissenters have been allowed to leave the USSR, and Plyushch's memoirs are especially valuable for describing nationalist and democratic tendencies in the Ukraine since the early 1960s. Plyushch's own Ukrainian patriotism emerged rather late, consequent to development of his more global critique of the Soviet system. Only in 1966 (when he was 27 years old) did he begin to speak Ukrainian as his first language, under the influence of Ivan Dzyuba (the author of the 1965 essay *Internationalism or Russification?* and the best-known Ukrainian nationalist of the 1960s). In his book he describes his encounters with several varieties of Ukrainian nationalists. He reserves his criticism for those who were concerned only with Ukrainian culture and language to the exclusion of political and human rights commitment, although he believes that the wave of arrests of Ukrainian cultural figures in 1972 (see for example Victor Swoboda, 'Cat and Mouse in the Ukraine', *Index* 1/1973, pp.81-9) increased the political consciousness of these 'cultural nationalists'.

Plyushch was also associated with the activities of Jewish dissenters in the Ukraine, whose relationship with their Ukrainian counterparts appears to have been precarious under normal circumstances and susceptible to official provocations exploiting the local traditions of antisemitism. Meanwhile the Ukrainian nationalists themselves are sensitive to any manifestation of chauvinism by Russian dissenters. Plyushch emphasises that the latter is likely to engender intolerance and reactionary tendencies among movements of other nationalities.

Plyushch's Ukrainian nationalism is secondary to his Marxism. Although in his memoirs he does not systematically set down his understanding and application of Marxism, his fragmented account of its development is one of the book's more interesting features. The nature and extent of Marxist opposition within the USSR is little known. Reports have appeared on a number of local Marxist-Leninist groups which have been broken up by the police since the 1950s. From what is known these groups consisted mainly of intellectuals and students who advocated a return to Leninist norms; participants were usually sentenced to imprisonment. Plyushch, by contrast, in his investigations of the reasons for the 'degeneration of the revolution' became critical of part of Lenin's basic teaching and turned to Marx for the answers. He worked towards a synthesis of Marx with modern 'absurdist' writers and with Freud; further contributions to this familiar-sounding neo-Marxism came from Soviet *samizdat* songwriters, especially Alexander Galich and Yuly Kim.

Plyushch's account of his arrest in 1972 and his subsequent period in the Dnepropetrovsk special psychiatric hospital graphically illustrates the worst aspects of political repression in the USSR. The Serbsky Institute psychiatrists (joined by Andrei Snezhnevsky) who 'diagnosed' him scarcely pretended that he was really mentally ill, and in the psychiatric hospital only one of the doctors (and virtually no-one among the other staff) was unaware that he was there only for political reasons. Plyushch states that the doctors were the most vicious of the personnel and gives numerous examples of their use of neuroleptic drugs and sulfazin on patients solely as a means of disciplining and intimidating them. He provides rare information on other political inmates in the hospital (including Anatoly Lupynos, Victor Rafalsky, Mykola Plakhotnyuk and Boris Yevdokimov), whose fate is particularly bleak since so little is known about them outside the secretive special psychiatric hospital. It is plain that Plyushch was deliberately tortured with drugs in an attempt to extract from him admission that his activities had been criminal. While he knew of the campaign abroad to help him (he was told by his wife and by some of the staff members who learned of it from foreign radio stations), he did not believe it would be successful.

Plyushch's release from this grim trap was due to his wife, Tatyana Zhitnikova, more than to anyone else. It is therefore appropriate that a chapter of the book is written by her. In it she describes the harassments to which she was subjected during his confinement and her campaign to obtain his release. Her appeals to the Soviet authorities were to no avail, and of course her assertion that he was not mentally ill was easily brushed aside by psychiatrists for whom 'apparent normality' does not preclude dangerous lunacy. Her successful tactic was to make known

as many facts as possible about Plyushch and his treatment. These were in turn passed on by Moscow human rights activists. (A volume of this documentation, *Istoriya Boleznyi Leonida Plyushcha,* edited by the Moscow linguist Tatyana Khodorovich, was reviewed in *Index* 1/1975, pp. 99-101.) The hard information which she provided captured the imagination and the conscience of mathematicians abroad, whose international campaign on Plyushch's behalf culminated in late 1975 when the French Communist Party publicly expressed concern in his case. Plyushch was subsequently released and has since devoted his efforts to work for prisoners of conscience throughout the world. Meanwhile many of his friends are still suffering anonymously in Dnepropetrovsk. □

Alice in Bantustan-land

Christopher Hope

The Soweto I Love by Sipho Sepamla *Rex Collings* (with David Philip, Cape Town) 52pp £1.50

The only acquaintance readers outside South Africa are likely to have with the work of Sipho Sepamla will be his contribution to Robert Royston's seminal anthology of black South African verse, *To Whom It May Concern,* published a few years ago. They will recall him as a sophisticated poet, at once more subtle and tough-minded than Oswald Mtshali, avowedly working in English though unafraid of the fruitful mixing which takes place in the Republic among the different languages – if nowhere else. Up until now Sepamla, rather than attack the crude discriminations of apartheid head-on, has preferred to register them with a wry pointed wit. He is a clear-eyed Alice recording the syntactical absurdities of Bantustan-land:

> we are talking of those words
> that stalk our lives like policemen
> words no dictionary can embrace
> words that change sooner than seasons
> ('Words, Words, Words')

It is dismaying to have to record that there are few poems as good as this in his new collection. I can imagine few roles to which Sepamla is better fitted than the scrutineer of language, most especially in a country where the white population in general practises self-censorship, guarding their tongues with an enthusiasm rivalled only by their passion for rugby, where the use of the national wordhoard is entirely at the discretion of the Minister, and language serves as the strong right arm of ideology to a degree which only those who live in the police states of Eastern Europe will fully comprehend.

If, then, you reflect on the possibility that perhaps the most fraught political event of recent times in South Africa has been the Soweto rising, and in the small literature which somehow survives between the poles of individual indifference and cultural repression which is apartheid's heritage, black poetry is the single most important phenomenon of the past five years, it might have seemed that an attempt to connect the events was right and timely. It's all the more pity, indeed it's a crying shame that Sipho Sepamla proves unequal to both occasions:

> I love you Soweto
> I've done so long before
> the summer swallow deserted you
> I've bemoaned the smell of death
> hanging on your other neck like an albatross
> I have hated the stench of your blood
> blood made to flow in every street
> ('Soweto')

The dead of Soweto and other places to whom this book is ostensibly dedicated might have hoped for better than such hollow mumblings and predictable sentiments shot through with bombast. They might have expected to be commemorated in language rather sturdier than the sort which the white women's magazines reserve for their more excitable readers:

> how can I say this is home
> where mother has to plug wounds dripping blood
> with sweat-stained hands
> when sister has to shield from bullets
> breasts drooping squirting pain
> ('Measure For Measure')

What is this but overblown rhetoric, grape-shot masquerading as gunfire to make the faint-hearted squeal? It is a feature of writing which has forgotten the real. Such forgetfulness has been a feature of much South African writing because reality has for so long failed to break through. Of course, some saw more clearly than others the way things were going. Poets such as Mongane Wally Serote, anticipated and to some extent have now been overtaken by the bloody confrontations in the townships. But Sepamla has never seemed part of this school, choosing passionate irony as his medium rather than angry commitment.

I suspect that there are other reasons why so

good a poet has been knocked off course. Firstly, there is the case to be argued that some of the best black poets have been spurred on by frustrated white liberals driven almost demented by the jeering contempt of the regime for every form of protest, and see in this new verse a last chance to hit the government with something that hurts. Secondly, it must be noted that riding alongside the new black verse (for everything in South Africa is done in parallel, whether separate developments, dual mediums or equal freedoms) has been a growing black consciousness expressed in the furious prose of young student leaders in whom, by common agreement of their fathers and the police, the future now rests. The danger is that now the blood is on the streets, the poets will give themselves increasingly to noisy, ineffectual war dances.

The most hopeful thing about Sepamla's collection, as far as I can see, is the handful of poems suggesting that he hasn't entirely given way to these pressures. 'Talk To The Peach Tree' with its perfectly judged periods which never conceal his icy contempt for the architects of the system as well as for those who find themselves at the bottom of the pile is typical of Sepamla at his best:

> Let's pick items from the rubbish heap
> ask how the stench is like down there

The Soweto I Love is published simultaneously in South Africa and Britain, and the last thing I'd wish would be to discourage publishers here from continuing this enlightened practice. Censorship in South Africa can only become more severe, and nothing is more certain but that when the dead for whom Sepamla speaks find their true poet he will be silenced immediately in his own country. □

Devouring the cannibals

David Pryce-Jones

The Ottoman empire, until this century the principal suzerain in the Middle East, fought a long delaying action against the impact of the West. The Young Turk revolution, and then Ataturk's dictatorship, though nominally justified as being in the interests of independence, in fact marked the turn to Westernisation. The alphabet was altered with untold consequences for culture; religion and custom were suppressed and minorities subjected – and all in the name of progress as understood in the best Western circles. Persia, as it then was, suffered parallel experiences, under the usurper Reza Pahlavi and now his son, the present Shah. Throughout the Middle East ancient and endemic despotism had acquired a modern guise, and now runs virtually unchecked, whether in countries like Turkey and Persia which were not occupied by foreign powers, or in countries like Iraq and Syria, which were. So colonialism is not responsible. It is rather that Western technology, and what it propagates by way of civilisation, has proved irresistible, and is easily exploited by the unscrupulous.

Inevitably the response in the Middle East has been unhappy. For the most part people did not wish to lose a settled fabric of life which, if imperfect, was also integral to Islam. It seemed that because they did not invent machines they were to have some sort of inferiority rammed down their throats, and they resented it. But the machines were desirable. So people became imbued with a distressing love-hate, in that they craved

for goods and services which were alien and destructive of identity. This has now happened. The recent increases in the price of oil places everybody in the Middle East, down to the nomads, in the consumer society.

Turkish and Persian intellectuals, when they first came to analyse the disproportionate developments between East and West, concluded that democracy held the key. They had only to introduce constitutional reform and a general franchise and all would be well. Today it is realised that such devices, imitated from abroad and imposed from above upon the old society, effectively strengthen the arbitrary ruler who still manipulates the system to suit himself but labels it democracy. So in despair intellectuals like Dr Baraheni come to call for primitive methods too, such as plots for the assassination of the ruler, or violence in all and any form. For them to adopt Marxism is unconditional surrender to Western ideology, and it is also to make a fundamental misappreciation, for in matters of technology and consumerism the Soviet Union has a common aspiration with the West.

To describe the impasse at this length is also to become familiar with Dr Baraheni's mind. His book is pure martyrology. Persian history to him is a tale of ogres from Cyrus and Darius downwards, to the present Shah. Persian fathers, he argues, are mythically, but also physically, compelled to kill and even eat their sons. Women, in this patriarchy, are things to be bought and sold. The ruler is the most cannibal of fathers, sole agent where everyone else is passive. Iran nowadays is the prisoner of the CIA, he says, and the Shah its stooge, but also (in contradiction) the richest freebooting gangster in the world.

Dr Baraheni knows the West and sees that it has almost lost balance in dealing with its own technology. More Westernisation in Iran will further unbalance whatever still remains original and valuable there. He does not therefore propose that the oil wells should be capped, and Iranians should return to the ways of their forefathers. His approving quotations from Marx and Fanon suggest that he expects nothing much from importing democracy into a situation he sees as hopeless. Instead he has plentiful sybilline mutterings about revolution, the people rising out of their darkness, devouring the cannibals, and so forth. His poems at the end of the book are along these lines too, with quite an edge of hysteria to them. Whether this sort of violence will be of greater benefit to the Iranians than the Shah's sort of violence is not clarified.

Describing the Shah's violence he is more impressive. In 1973 he was arrested and summarily held without charges for 102 days. He tells how he was brutalised and tortured, and finally offered a deal whereby he would be released if he recanted on television. This he refused to do, and might have suffered a worse fate had not several Western organisations intervened successfully on his behalf. From his account, the activities which he was asked to recant, and for which he was persecuted, were literary and perhaps nationalistic, for he is an Azerbaijani Turk, a minority who like the Kurds have been press-ganged into modern Iran at the expense of their language and culture. What his politics were, he does not declare except through hints. He told one interrogator that he, Dr Baraheni, would be shot first of the two if the Russians came, and in a footnote he submits that some Iranian Maoists at Berkeley published a pamphlet 'Confucius and Baraheni – Reactionary Traitors'.

Whether or not he was active on the political Left, it is depressing to read about the exercise of tyranny to which Dr Baraheni fell victim. Depressing, too, to read about the others in the same predicament, and Dr Baraheni can be forceful and informative. How a country like Iran should evolve is as intractable a question as any in the world today, and it produces tragic figures like Dr Baraheni. Understandably, his energies have come to be focussed entirely on hatred of the Shah, but this leads him to remarking, to give just one instance, that the Shah's nose is too big and 'thrust out shamelessly as an erected phallus upon a polite gathering'. That may do for the Western campus, but the Western campus is a very sad alternative to the debate inside Iran, which is where Dr Baraheni is needed. □

The Budapest school
George Gömöri

Socialism and Bureaucracy by András Hegedüs *Allison & Busby* 193 pp £2.95 (paperback)
The Humanisation of Socialism – Writings of the Budapest School (Andras Hegedüs, Agnes Heller, Maria Markus, Mihaly Vajda) *Allison & Busby* 177 pp £2.95 (paperback)

Although many factors work against it, Marxist thought is not quite dead in Eastern Europe. While the events of 1968 deprived Poland of some of her ablest philosophers and sociologists and since 1969

the best-known representatives of Marxist philosophy in Czechoslovakia have been exposed to official harassment and are still under a publication ban (Karel Kosík is the obvious example), in Hungary the situation is less depressing. True, until recently the so-called 'Budapest school' has been suffering from the after-effects of its 1968 clash with the Party line, so that for some years Hungarian philosophers and sociologists could not travel freely and their works were not published; yet in 1976 a collection of essays by Agnes Heller did appear and, as far as we know, there was no adverse official reaction to the publication of her work of other Hungarian Marxist philosophers abroad. On the other hand, the Editor's note to András Hegedüs' *Socialism and Bureaucracy* (why does the translator misspell the author's name?) claims that most of his essays in this volume are chapters taken from a larger work which is unpublished and 'is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future'. This is odd, since – as the bibliographical notes show – *all* these essays were published in Hungarian literary and economic reviews between 1966 and 1970 – why would the censor oppose their reprint? It is not so much the author's views as the political climate that has changed.

András Hegedüs is a sociologist whose career reflects the ups and downs of the Hungarian Communist movement since the last war. He joined the illegal Communist party during the war and quickly rose in the new post-war hierarchy; in fact, he was made Prime Minister in April 1955 by Mátyás Rákosi, Hungary's little-lamented Stalinist dictator. The role played by Hegedüs in October 1956 was odious, to say the least – he made the official request for the first Russian military intervention during the uprising; but he was one of the few Communists who managed to learn the right lesson from the events. He left politics and became a central figure in the 'sociological revival' that hit Hungary in the early sixties. This was the period when the Kádár regime decided to prepare the New Economic Reform (introduced in 1968 but severely watered down a few years later), and parallel to the developing critique of the Stalinist planned economy much debate was going on about the sociological changes that had affected Hungary, as well as about the various ways in which the scope of 'socialist democracy' could be broadened in everyday life. Hegedüs was encouraged by the government's determination to embark upon the road of economic reform but did not believe that a real socialist community could be created by economic means alone. The essays in *Socialism and Bureaucracy* argue for the necessity of some form of social control over the bureaucracy and over economic administration, Hegedüs pointing out that the mere fact that a bureaucracy calls itself 'Socialist' and has no class interests antagonistic to the welfare of the population does not prevent it from serving its own particular interests.

The starting point of Hegedüs' critique is Marxist theory; but while he quotes Marx and Lenin whenever he can, he also draws on the results of Western sociology, making references to Merton, Whyte and Dahrendorf and trying to discuss the problem inherent in the bureaucracy's relations with the rest of the population in an objective manner. Some of his findings are not new, others are new only in an Eastern European context, but he gives considerable attention to central problems and many of his formulations are felicitous. His two last essays 'Bureaucratism and the Social Pathology of Administration' and 'The Intelligentsia and the Administration' are particularly interesting; in the latter Hegedüs tries to explain why the interests of the administration usually clash with that of the intelligentsia – how its moralistic system of values comes into conflict with the officially sponsored values of 'institutional effectiveness'. His conclusion, that 'there is no other solution left apart from mutual tolerance', may be accepted by some functionaries in Hungary but would be certainly branded as 'Revisionist' in most hard-line Communist countries.

The anthology of the 'Budapest School', *The Humanisation of Socialism*, also includes an essay by András Hegedüs on the self-criticism of socialist society; this, to my mind, is one of the most perceptive writings on the subject in any Communist land with the possible exception of Yugoslavia. The other pieces in the collection cast interesting and informative light on the quest of a small but influential group of Hungarian sociologists and philosophers; their chief concern is not so much (as the blurb on the back cover claims) 'the transition from socialism to communism', but rather as the title proclaims, the humanisation, that is, the de-alienation of Socialism. This is a very large subject indeed, for the critique of the four authors in this volume is directed not only against the bureaucracy but also against the inequality of women in Socialist societies (Agnes Heller, Maria Markus), the fetishism and alienated character of everyday life (Agnes Heller), as well as the distorted character of the Socialist citizen's value-system. Agnes Heller, who is also author of *The Theory of Need in Marx* (Allison & Busby, 1976), translated from the German, is a more pene-

trating but also a more Utopian thinker than András Hegedüs. Her central piece in this collection is probably 'Theory and Practice from the Point of View of Human Needs'. In it Heller claims that neither reform nor political revolution can provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of human needs, only 'total revolutionary practice' which includes a revolution in the way of life. In other words, she maintains that alienation cannot be remedied in the present-day Party-bureaucratic structure of Socialist societies.

While both collections contain interesting contributions to Socialist thought, the style of the essays is bogged down by the densely Germanic philosophical language, used by some post-Lukácsians, such as Ms Heller. I do not quite see the reason for the unorthodox spelling introduced in both books, (i.e. marxism, hegelians instead of Marxism, Hegelians) and it is somewhat puzzling why the name of the translator or translators was omitted. Were the texts translated from the Hungarian original or were they in fact retranslated from German? Being well aware of the unscrupulous practice of some publishers, this would not come as a complete surprise to this reviewer. □

Letter to the Editor
Antonio di Benedetto

DEAR SIR, My attention has been drawn to your recent report on the fate of the Argentine writer Antonio di Benedetto and his long imprisonment (*Index* 2/1977 page 6), and I am accordingly writing to inform you of our own initiatives in connection with this case.

Last spring, the Université de Haute Bretagne in Rennes (France), at which I am a professor, sent a formal invitation to Antonio di Benedetto through the proper channels, inviting him to give a series of lectures on Latin American literature at the university for the last trimester of the present academic year (April-May 1977). This was largely due to the fact that di Benedetto's work figures in a course given at the University since 1975. Furthermore, the French translation of his novel *Zama*, which was published in October 1976, has meant that his work has become available to a wider public.

Our invitation, which received quite a wide press coverage, remained unanswered, and Antonio di Benedetto is still held in the prison at La Plata where he has been for the past year and a half. We intend to renew our invitation for the next academic year, in the hope that this writer, whose work has been justly acclaimed for its undeniable literary qualities, and who has contributed so much to Argentina's intellectual standing in the world, might finally be allowed to come to this country.

Yours sincerely,

Albert Bensoussan, Université de Haute Bretagne, Rennes, France.

Contributors

Antonio di Benedetto has now been released from custody. Ed Note.

Robert L. Bernstein is President of the US publishing firm, Random House Inc. and Chairman of the US Advisory Board of *Index on Censorship.*

George Gömöri is a lecturer in Slavonic Studies at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Darwin College.

José Napoleon Gonzalez was the founder and director of *La Crónica del Pueblo,* the independent newspaper in El Salvador which was closed down by the authorities last February. The paper has since been allowed to appear again.

Robert Harris is the pen name of a writer who specialises in Latin American affairs.

Christopher Hope is a South African novelist and poet living in London.

Milan Kundera, a leading Czech novelist and playwright, is banned in his own country but widely published abroad. At present he is Visiting Professor of Literature at the Université de Haute Bretagne in Rennes. His latest novel, *The Farewell Party,* was published in London by John Murray in October.

Robert McDonald is a Canadian journalist and broadcaster living in London. He worked in Greece from 1966 to 1970.

Roger Plant works as a researcher for Amnesty International. He specialises in Latin America.

David Pryce-Jones is a writer and journalist, author of six novels, a book on the Palestinians and on Unity Mitford and the Nazi era.

N. J. Small works in the Department of Educational Studies in Edinburgh. He spent six years in Zambia, working at the Centre for Continuing Education in Lusaka.

Clayton Yeo, a Canadian, works in the research department of Amnesty International in London.

We apologise to **Graham Mytton,** author of 'Tanzania – a sase study' in *Index* 5/1977, for having misspelt his name in that issue.